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Travel Montana UPDATE

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Hey Kids, Travel Montana Has a Website for You!

Montana Governor Marc Racicot and Travel Montana staff unveiled the state's newest information website—MONTANA KIDS!—just in time for Christmas '97. The unveiling took place Dec. 22 next to the official state Christmas Tree in the Capitol Rotunda. A group of Helena area studentsand school administrators checked out the site as it was demonstrated to Governor Racicot.

The website (http://kids.state.mt.us) has been a year in the making under the direction of Travel Montana and UM students at the Information Technology Resource Center (ITRC) in Missoula. It features eight sections of information about Montana that will be useful to students studying about the state and—as Travel Montana's Shawn Peterson says—"could get kids interested enough in Montana that they get their families to bring them here for a visit."

The website information sections include: Welcome (Governor Racicot and his son, Joe, both make presentations here), Things To Do & See, Montana Facts, Features, Plants & Animals, Agriculture, Montana History, and Activities & Games. MONTANA KIDS! also offers users "cool links" to other websites like Travel Montana, Glacier and Yellowstone parks, the National Geographic Kids Site on Yellowstone and more.

The MONTANA KIDS! website "host" is a duck-billed dinosaur cartoon character named Maia. Maia and the other cartoon features were created by Helena artist Peter Grosshauser. A number of other partners helped Travel Montana and the ITRC put the site together. They include Montana's Historical Society, Montana Agriculture Dept., State Library, Fish, Wildlife & Parks along with students from the Cascade Future Farmers of America Chapter.

Shawn says that "like any website, this is an ongoing project that will be added to, updated and improved as time goes on." Montana students will be invited to work on the site as will other agencies and organizations interested in contributing to the site's presentations.

Winter Visitor Interest Up—Winter Don't Fail Us Now!

As of our newsletter's writing, winter is developing slowly in Big Sky Country. Let's hope this article is like washing the car on a clear spring day; precipitation is soon to follow—and please make it white, fluffy precipitation!

Is anyone really interested in Montana's winter? Yes, they are! Responses to Montana's 1997/98 winter recreation ads—downhill and cross-country skiing and snowmobiling—were up as of the end of the year. Here is a summary of the ad inquiry reports.

❄ DOWNHILL SKIING

Inquiries to Montana's downhill ski ads are up 16% over 1996. Internet inquiries are strong while phone calls, letters and reader services requesting information are lower than last year.

❄ CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

While low in actual numbers, print ad response is double last year and website inquiries are up three-fold. An interesting tidbit: the best inquiry generating publications for this campaign have been two general interest magazines: SUNSET and COUNTRY AMERICA.

❄ SNOWMOBILING

Like cross-country skiing, snowmobile ads have never generated many inquiries, but this year's campaign has seen a three-fold response in website inquiries and almost double the response to the print ads.

Typically, Montana's winter recreation opportunities bring in about 10% of Montana visitors' $1.2 billion annual expenditures. So, let's all put in a collective request to Snow-maker to keep the white stuff coming. Winter, don't fail us now!

24th Governor's Conference Planning Underway

Circle and highlight April 6–7 on your 1998 calendars. Those are the dates for the 24th Governor's Conference on Tourism and Recreation. Kalispell is hosting this year's Montana tourism industry gathering. Conference activities will take place at the Outlaw Inn with the Tuesday night banquet being held at Cavanaugh's.

Information packets for conference exhibitors and sponsors were mailed out in mid-December. If you are interested in being an exhibitor or sponsor and have not received a packet yet, please contact Roxanne Tubbs at RMS in Helena, 443-1160

More Governor's Conference information will be coming your way in future newsletters.

Tourism Award Nominations Sought

Nominations for Montana's Tourism Person of the Year, regional recognitions and a new category—Tourism Community of the Year—are now being accepted by the Tourism Advisory Council (TAC). Call 444-2654 to get nomination forms. The completed forms and supporting materials should be sent to TAC, c/o Travel Montana, by March 16.

Montana Day at the SADDLEDOME

Montana and Montanans will be featured at Calgary's SADDLEDOME sports arena on Saturday afternoon, March 28. The Calgary Flames Hockey Club organization will be hosting Montana Governor Marc Racicot, two Montana junior hockey teams and other Montana guests for their 1– 4 pm game with the L.A. Kings.

This first-ever "Montana Day" at the SADDLEDOME is an effort by the Flames to expand their club's fan base in Montana. The Montana Governor's Office views this as another opportunity to highlight and strengthen Montana's personal and economic relations with Alberta. Travel Montana along with some of the state's tourism regions and CVBs will be setting up display booths in the SADDLEDOME's concourse to share Montana travel information with the attending hockey fans. The Flames attract 15,000 to 18,000 fans to Saturday afternoon games. Promotion of the Alberta/ Montana Discovery Guide will also be part of the "Montana Day" activities.

If you are in Calgary for this weekend, take in a hockey game and be recognized as a good Montana neighbor.

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The Regions Hit the Road

A number of Montana tourism regions will be taking Montana information to travel and sports trade shows around the region. Here's a run down of who will be where and when:

★ ***Jan 8–11 46th Sports, Vacation and RV Show, Pheonix, AZ***
Russell Country's Gayle Fisher and Linda Anderson of Glacier Country will attend this mature market trade show. About 60% of the 20,000 attendees own RVs, travel trailers or campers, making them a good target market for Montana.

★ ***Jan 13–18 The Minnesota Sportsmen's Boat, Camping & Vacation Show, St. Paul, MN***
Custer and Missouri River countries and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks will staff the Montana booth at this hunting and fishing show.

★ ***Feb. 26–Mar. 1 The Dallas Morning News World Wide Adventure Travel Showcase, Dallas, TX***
Glacier and Russell countries will have Linda and Gayle at this show as well. They will begin with one-on-one contacts with travel agents followed by a consumer show that attracts lots of 35–54 year olds interested in all forms of outdoor recreation.

1998 Farm & Ranch Workshops

Two Farm & Ranch Recreation Business Workshops are are scheduled for February. Billings' Clarion Hotel is the site for the first workshop Tues., Feb. 10. A Missoula workshop on Thurs., Feb. 12, will be at Ruby's Reserve Street Inn. Each will discuss consumer and business trends in the farm and ranch recreation arena, legal considerations, marketing and pricing The workshops are a cooperative effort of MSU Extension and Travel Montana. For information, contact Travel Montana, 444-2654, or MSU Extension, 994-2962.

Travel Montana Calendar

January

15–25	Sundance Film Festival, Park City, UT
24–26	RMI Winter Roundup, Coeur d'Alene, ID
26–30	RMI Post Roundup FAM, The Big Mountain, Whitefish, MT

February

1	TAC Committee Meetings, Deer Lodge
2–3	TAC Meeting at "The Pen," Deer Lodge
10	Farm & Ranch Workshop, Billings
12	Farm & Ranch Workshop, Missoula

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